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AUG 16 2004

Technology Center 2600

ABSTRACT OF THE INVENTION

A receiver has an equalizer with plural equalization settings, which compensates for distortion in a received signal, and an adapter for selecting one of those settings which optimally compensates for the distortion. The adapter employs a trial and error procedure for evaluating equalizer performance for each such setting by first observing multiple levels of the incoming signal and defining therefrom valid regions, encompassing each of the multiple levels, and invalid regions. For each setting, the adapter computes first and second metrics respectively consisting of a count of samples within each of the invalid regions, and differences that are less than a predetermined threshold between pairs of samples falling within that valid region. For each setting, the adapter combines the metrics to produce a combined metric. The adapter then compares all of the combined metrics to determine the best metric and chooses the setting corresponding thereto.